

Biography

Karin M. Norington-Reaves is a lifelong public servant with more than 25 years of experience in education, law, advocacy, community and workforce development. In 2012, Karin became the founding Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) upon her appointment by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.



As CEO and change agent, she led the merger and restructuring of three diverse workforce systems into what is now the nation’s most extensive publicly funded workforce development system. Karin leads The Partnership’s mission to ensure that “every person has the skills to build a career and every business has the talent it needs to compete in a global economy.”

She oversees the administration of federal, state and philanthropic funds and the creation of effective programs that assure alignment between the skills demanded by a changing economy and those offered by the region’s labor force. She also works to generate both private and public funding to expand the services available throughout Chicagoland. Under her leadership, The Partnership has raised more than \$128 million in diverse funds, including a \$10.9 million grant awarded by the Walmart Foundation—the most significant gift in the history of the foundation.

A recognized thought leader on the national stage, Karin has served as a keynote speaker, panelist and presenter at a host of conferences, and convenings. An avid writer, she has published opinion pieces on topics ranging from issues of workforce development to motherhood. Additionally, delegations from Korea, China, and Great Britain have sought to learn from her leadership and organizational experience.

Karin’s civic engagement extends to numerous organizations. She serves as a member of the Cook County Economic Development Advisory Committee; the Board of Advisors for LISC Chicago; the Board of Trustees for the Workforce Development Council of the U.S. Conference of Mayors; the Board of Directors of the Chicago Lighthouse; the Board of the National Retail Federation Foundation; the Board of Access Living; and the Board of Thrive Chicago. She also spent eight years as a mentor/sponsor for LINK Unlimited.

Karin has received local and national awards for her outstanding professional and community-driven accomplishments. Karin’s recognitions include: the 2016 Excellence in Public Service award by the Civic Federation of Chicago and the Motorola Solutions Foundation; the 2017 Woman of Excellence award from the Chicago Defender; 2018 The List of People Shaping Retail’s Future Giver award from

the National Retail Federation Foundation; and 2018 Outstanding Achievement in Workforce & Labor award from Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

Before The Partnership, Karin served as Director of Cook County Works; Deputy Director of the Office of Urban Assistance for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Chief of Staff for the City of Chicago's 20th Ward. Karin spent eight years as a litigator for the U.S. Department of Justice, the Maryland Office of the Attorney General and the Citizens Utility Board in the fields of mental health law, education, contracts, and public utility consumer protection. She is a former adjunct law professor at Loyola University's Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy. Karin began her career as a Teach for America Corps member and first grade bilingual teacher in Compton, California.

A Chicago native, Karin holds a J.D. from Southern Methodist University School of Law in Dallas, Texas and a B.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is also the proud mother of a blended family of four children.